

## DID J.B. MOODY TEACH EMDA?

By  
J.C. Settlemoir

Letter # 7

In this series of letters I am responding to an article by Bro Bill Stang which appeared in *Voice in the Wilderness*, Dec. 14, 2006. In this letter we will take up Bro Stang's assertion that J.B. Moody believed his position on church constitution which is EMDA.

Now it is somewhat of a problem that Bro Stang appeals to *succession* to prove his point. He says of J.B. Moody and his book *My Church*:

Read what he says on pages 159-162. He uses 'succession' over and over again, and uses the exact same argument that we use today: 'about the law of primogenitors, that like begets like, everything living reproduces after it's own kind, and something dead cannot give birth to something living....,' the exact same argument our antagonist seethe over when we use it today. Will they be boiling if they read those four pages of Moody's book? This, again, from the era they love to quote to prove that nobody believed those things then. J.B. Moody...contended for both church perpetuity and church succession at a time when our antagonists say that nobody believed that then!" [Voice. P. 33, Col. 4. par. 1].

First let me reiterate this fact. Bro Stang and most EMDA writers refuse to define terms. It is hard to pin them down on what they mean. If we give the meaning of a term and prove our point, they merely switch to another meaning as if it were the same thing. Their backfield is in constant motion. They use divergent ideas for a term as if they meant the same thing.

Keep in mind what the subject is—*Is it essential to have a mother church to constitute a new church?* This I have defined as *Essential Mother Daughter Authority* (EMDA). The question is not *Succession* or *perpetuity*. Both sides believe these doctrines, in spite of many statements to the contrary by Bro Stang and others. This is merely a smoke screen. It is an effort to hide the real issue. In this letter I will deal only with J.B. Moody's position. Did he teach EMDA? Bro Stang *implies* that he did. If so, it should be easy to ascertain this fact. Let us see.

My notes from reading *My Church* contain about seventy entries. It is true that Moody does use some of the very terms which EMDA writers do now and as quoted by Bro Stang above. Moody makes many statements which taken alone and out of context might lead someone to think he was expressing EMDA. Thus in *LUF* when I quoted Moody, I did not give a mere line or two but quoted several

paragraphs so the context would be clear.

The first thing to note is that in all the writings of Moody which are available, some six or eight volumes, not one EMDA writer has produced a single passage from him which **explicitly states the doctrine of EMDA!** The reader will understand why we have this lack of a quotation. Again let me emphasize the predicament this produces for my EMDA brethren. We contend the doctrine of EMDA is a modern tradition. In contradiction, these men teach the old Landmarkers taught EMDA and that you cannot constitute a church without EMDA. A self constituted church—that is a church constituted without specific authority from another church—is a false church and they affirm this with all their power! Yet these men have never produced any express statement of this doctrine before 1900 by any writer, Landmark or otherwise! Is Moody an exception? Does Moody supply their *missing link*? Moody says:

20. It Multiplied Like Baptist Churches. Acts 8;1-18; 9:31; 11:19-26. Whatever the circumstances or cause of their scatteration, if they chose, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, they congregated and organized on the voluntary principle, and elected their own officers. Any Baptist church can divide; or any part of it for a good reason can pull out and organize when and where it pleases, because individual liberty is not destroyed or impaired by church membership. The churches of Judea, Samaria, Galilee, etc., thus organized, were recognized by the mother church and by the apostles and Christ. This is a golden mark. [Moody. My Church. P. 58].

This is not the teaching of EMDA! EMDAites do not believe what Moody said: "...if they chose, by the direction of the Holy Spirit, they congregated and organized on the voluntary principle..." or "any part of it for good reason can pull out and organize when and where it pleases..." The reader will realize that no such word ever fell from the lips of an EMDA man!

Moody goes on to say in this quote that the churches of Judea, Samaria, Galilee were so organized, and were---mark carefully, ***not organized, not authorized, not constituted*** but *what*? They were **recognized** by the mother church at Jerusalem! Keep in mind that *mother* does not mean what EMDAites want it to mean, i.e., *mother church authority*, but rather *first*.

Remember! *Recognize* is not the same thing as *authorize*! If the church at Jerusalem had *authorized* these other churches in constitution (and this is exactly what EMDA men teach must have been the case, without any evidence) then **recognition** would have been unnecessary, superfluous! Mothers do not have recognition services for their offspring! But because these churches were *self constituted* then the first church *recognized* their constitutions as according to Scripture. This makes good sense and I believe it evident this is what Moody was saying. Such has been Baptist polity from the beginning.

But let us consider the following also. Moody says:

A Baptist church is composed of volunteers associated in congregational effort, each member in equal authority, and each church complete in itself and independent of all other churches and of all outside authorities. Thus it was in the beginning. J.B. Moody, *My Church*, p. 63.

Whatever Moody is saying here, it will not fit the EMDA mould. He says a church is constituted by what means?

It is, he says, “composed of volunteers.”

Well enough. But how constituted?

“Associated in congregational effort...each church complete in itself .”

But did it not get authority from another church?

“Complete in itself and independent of all other churches and of all outside authorities.”

Does this does sound like EMDA? No! In fact, EMDA cannot get a seat on Moody’s train, not even in the caboose! And furthermore, EMDA men do not even want to ride his rail when they learn what he believed! They had rather walk than ride with Moody! But there is more. Listen carefully.

Moody makes this so clear that no one can misunderstand unless he willingly blinds himself to what he says:

A Baptist church is not a branch of that trunk, nor any other trunk. It is the thing itself, all to itself. Its members live in Christ, the vine. He is life to the members, but head to the church. The member gets life from the vine, while the church gets authority from its head. J.B. Moody. *My Church*, p. 62.

Where does a church **get its authority**? This is what Bro Stang’s article was supposed to establish! He quotes Moody but not this passage where Moody tells us expressly from whence a church gets its authority! Why didn’t Bro Stang quote this? Is it not pertinent to the discussion? Does this not tell how a church gets its authority? Was this not what Bro Stang set out to find? Moody says expressly:

“...the church gets authority from its head.” Who is the head of the Church? Jesus Christ!

A church cannot get authority from two different sources for the same thing! Thus, either it gets its authority from its head, or it gets it from another church. EMDA says the latter, Moody says the former. Now whether our EMDA friends or Moody is right, it makes no difference for our purpose here. All I am showing is that Moody did not believe nor practice EMDA. If words mean anything at all, everyone can see Bro Stang has misrepresented Moody on this issue!

Now we have found the very man quoted by Bro Stang to prove his position did not teach EMDA but self constitution! What a shocking revelation! How careless to quote a man as a main supporter of EMDA, the point man, so-to-

speak, of the old Landmarkers, who did not believe it but set forth the exact opposite!

These brethren are hard pressed. They cannot find an express statement of their doctrine before 1900. Nor can they find any old Landmarker who taught it.

When anyone knows his position is false and yet continues to claim it is true what can we say? What should these brethren do now? We all know what they should do. They know what they should do. The question is, will they do it?